

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 02421 280000Z
ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE ASHDC 7302
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 2421

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECON, PBOR, PGOV, SENV, BR, XL, GY
SUBJECT: THE AMAZON PACT AND GUYANA

REF: STATE 180478

1. POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS ATTACH IMPORTANCE TO THE PACT AS IT IS GUYANA'S FIRST REGIONAL TREATY WITH THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTINENT. ALTHOUGH PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM RECENTLY RESTATED THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA'S COMMITMENT TO CARICOM DURING THE ORGANIZATION'S MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, GUYANA'S PHYSICAL LOCATION AND THE VAST ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF CARICOM LIMIT THE UTILITY TO GUYANA OF A PREDOMINANTLY CARIBBEAN-ORIENTED FOREIGN POLICY. RECENT HIGH-LEVEL DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS BETWEEN GUYANA AND VENEZUELA, BRAZIL AND SURINAM INDICATE A DESIRE BY GUYANA TO PREVENT A RETURN TO THE ACRIMONIOUS AND AT TIMES BELLICOSE STATE OF RELATIONS THAT EXISTED IN THE PAST WITH HER THREE NEIGHBORS.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 GEORGE 02421 280000Z

NEVERTHELESS, GUYANA'S SOCIALIST AND NON-ALIGNED POLICIES WILL PROBABLY SERVE AS A BRAKE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CLOSER RELATIONS WITH HER ANTI-COMMUNIST AND CAPITALIST NEIGHBORS.

2. ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE. FORMIN OFFICIALS DO NOT FORE-SEE ANY IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC IMPACT. DUE TO ONGOING BALANCE

OF PAYMENTS CRISIS, GUYANA WILL DE-EMPHASIZE HINTERLAND DEVELOPMENT AND WILL CONCENTRATE ON COASTAL AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS FOR WHICH EXTERNAL FINANCING IS LIKELY TO BE AVAILABLE. THEY POINT OUT THAT BRAZIL, DESPITE ITS SIZE AND RELATIVE WEALTH, IS DEFICIENT IN CAPITAL AND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MOUNT AN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WHICH WOULD ENABLE GUYANA TO DEVELOP ITS INTERIOR. MOST LIKELY OUTCOME UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE PACT IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD WOULD BE A BILATERAL AGREEMENT TO FACILITATE BORDER TRADE IN THE RUPUNUNI REGION. OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION WOULD BE CONFINED TO SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES ON THE GEOLOGY AND ECOLOGY OF THE REGION.

3. REACTION IN GUYANA. THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED "GUYANA CHRONICLE" PUBLISHED IN THREE INSTALLMENTS THE ENTIRE TEXT OF THE PACT. OTHERWISE, THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED PRESS AND RADIO GAVE PERFUNCTORY COVERAGE TO THE SIGNING, CONCENTRATING ON BLANDLY LISTING THE MAJOR AREAS OF COOPERATION COVERED IN THE PACT AND THE SIGNATORIES. THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP) MADE NO EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE SIGNING. PREVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, THE PPP CRITICIZED THE LACK OF GOG CONSULTATION WITH THE OPPOSITION DURING THE LONG PERIOD OF NEGOTIATIONS. THE PPP ALSO CRITICIZED THE WISDOM OF ENTERING INTO THE PACT, OPINING THAT "US MONOPOLIES" ARE BEHIND THE MOVEMENT TO EXPLOIT THE AMAZON BASIN. SIMILARLY, THE NEWSPAPER OF

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GEORGE 02421 280000Z

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF GUYANA VIEWED THE PACT AS AN EXTENSION OF BRAZIL'S DOMESTIC POLICY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGARDLESS OF THE SOCIAL AND HUMAN COSTS. BOTH THE PPP AND CATHOLIC CHURCH CRITICIZED ESPECIALLY BRAZIL'S TREATMENT OF AMERINDIANS. THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC REACTION TO THE SIGNING OF THE PACT. THE GUYANESE ARE TRADITIONALLY ORIENTED TOWARDS THE CARIBBEAN, US, CANADA, AND UK, AND ARE NOW PREOCCUPIED WITH SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS AT HOME.

4. PROSPECTS FOR RATIFICATION. RATIFICATION IS ASSURED AS THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) PARTY CONTROLS TWO-THIRDS OF PARLIAMENT. HOWEVER, THE GOG IS APPARENTLY GIVING FIRST PRIORITY TO DRAFTING A NEW CONSTITUTION AND COPING WITH THE INTERNAL SITUATION. THERE IS NO INDICATION AS TO WHEN THE PACT WILL BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT.

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Message Attributes

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